



**Special Messages from
8 U.S. Consuls General in Chiang Mai**
*on the occasion to celebrate the 60th anniversary of
the U.S. Consulate General in Chiang Mai and
strong bonds between the U.S. and northern Thailand.*



“Vivid memories of Chiang Mai over the years... Someday I hope to capture some of the memories in a book...”

Consul General Terrell R. Otis (1985-1987)

Chiang Mai was my first diplomatic posting in 1971. I returned for a second tour in 1985, so have the unique privilege of being the only Foreign Service Officer to have served as Vice Counsel, Counsel, and as the first American Consul General in Chiang Mai. In addition, as a State Department Thai desk officer in the late 1970s, I visited Thailand to assist with Cambodian relief and anti-piracy refugee programs. My very first exposure to Thailand was as a Peace Corps volunteer working with malaria eradication in Loei. I travelled by bus to Chiang Mai in 1969, when the city was a quarter the size it is now and there were no high rise buildings and much less pollution. Thailand is my second home and the rich memories come back often, but especially when enjoying good Thai food. Even khao soi is now available here in a few Washington, D.C. restaurants!

Vivid memories of Chiang Mai over the years include counterinsurgency and counter narcotics operations, rural development and crop substitution programs (we tried to grow potatoes for McDonalds as a replacement for the opium poppy), cultural and economic initiatives, issuing the Consulate's first visa, coordinating the activities of multiple U.S. agencies, and threats from drug warlords. A literal high point was flying aerobatics in an OV-10 Bronco with the Royal Thai Air Force! And there were friends from an informal antique BMW motorcycle club, dozens of high-level official visitors and roast pig banquets in the Sala, my daughters throwing water at Songkran and petting an elephant in front of our house, Loi Kratong on the Mae Ping river, the haze from burning rice fields, and enjoying the North's beautiful scenery, delicious food and generous hospitality. I especially enjoyed working with the late Governor Chaiya Poonsiriwong, a dedicated civil servant and good friend, as we expanded the Consulate's activities and our bilateral cooperation in North Thailand.

My daughter Jade was born at McCormick Hospital in 1973. By 1985, my late wife Sarah was on her first diplomatic tour in Bangkok when Jade, younger daughter Lara, and I returned to Chiang Mai for my second assignment. Sarah would visit us every weekend, transitioning during the short flight from her consular duties in a large embassy to being an attentive mother while simultaneously juggling social obligations as the Consul General's wife. Chiang Mai holds rich and complicated memories for our whole family, and will always hold a special place in our hearts. Both professionally and personally, serving in Chiang Mai was among the most valuable and exciting assignments of my Foreign Service career. Someday I hope to capture some of the memories in a book...

-- Terry Otis





Consul Terry Otis, Amb. Bill Brown, and Gov. Chaiya Poonsiriwong
at the opening of the Visa Office at CG Chiang Mai, Oct 30, 1985.



Consul General Terry Otis flying an OV-10 with the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF Photo)



คือนักเรียน... มา... เพลิดเพลิน
 งาม โอหิ... กอง...
 อเม... เรือง
 โย... การ...
 รับ... โรนัลด์ แมค
 โด... ผู้...
 ยอต...
 ที่...
 ใหม่...
 การ...
 นาน...
 ไว้

THE SIGN READ "CHIANG MAI PEOPLE WELCOME RONALD MCDONALD"

WELCOME..

MR. TERRELL OTIS, AMERICAN CONSUL IN CHIANG MAI WELCOMES MR. RONALD MCDONALD, PRESIDENT OF THE FAMOUS U.S. MCDONALD COMPANY WHO RECENTLY COMES TO CHIANG MAI FOR A CHARITY PROGRAM AT THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL.

RABY NG
 JUN 15, 86
 P.F. 4

“Our two years in Chiang Mai were perhaps the most interesting and enjoyable of our Foreign Service life.”

Consul General Charles S. Ahlgren (1987-1989)

I arrived in Chiang Mai in the late summer of 1987 with my wife, Marianne, and two young children. The Consulate had been upgraded to a Consulate-General under Terry R. Otis shortly before.

Our two years in Chiang Mai were perhaps the most interesting and enjoyable of our Foreign Service life. The children thrived at CMIS. Marianne was active in numerous community activities, e.g. her work with the Chiang Mai deaf school and the New Life Center (founded by Paul Lewis, to assist young girls suffering from AIDS).

My most vivid memories are of the many wonderful and welcoming people we got to know in Chiang Mai and elsewhere in the consular district, both Thais and expatriates. We had an excellent CG Thai staff, ranging from the fine janitorial services provided by Janploy Puangjaktha to our senior FSN, Chat Na Chiangmai.

The diplomatic/consular community in Chiang Mai was small, consisting of us and the Indian and Japanese consuls. The Chinese had not yet established a post in Chiang Mai. There was regular air service to Bangkok and other Thai cities out of Chiang Mai, but not to other countries in Southeast Asia. .. (continued)



... (continued from previous page) Among the Thais, I have especially warm memories of the governor, Pairat Decharin, and his family. I was terribly saddened to hear of his death, and that of his lovely wife, in the 1991 Lauda plane crash. That accident not only took their lives and that of many of Chiang Mai's leaders, but dealt a blow to many development and planning activities in the town.

The academic and missionary communities in Chiang Mai were especially helpful to the Post, and provided much good company to us. Officials at Payap University, for example, helped organize several Thai-American association nights showcasing USIS visiting artists. The first one, featuring an American dance band, was a smashing success. The second offering, a group of clog dancers, pretty much bombed.

Academics and missionaries such as the Eubanks provided access and taught us a lot about the hill tribe communities. We also learned much about Thai history and culture from American scholars living and working in Thailand at the time. We particularly enjoyed the friendship of the Cornell historian David Wyatt, and the Southeast Asian ceramics historian Roxanna Brown.

A number of people helped in our efforts to beautify the Consulate grounds. Mrs. (Kunying) Kupadakuini worked with Marianne to establish a large bed of roses alongside the house. A Californian palm expert, Jack Ingwersen, donated and installed the large palms on the right side of the walkway leading to the consulate office entrance. These replaced some *lamyai* trees—we were sorry to see them go, but they were dying, possibly because of the high water table in the compound (We were flooded several times, and could never seem to find a solution to this satisfactory to the City. But we were better off than some; I dispatched sand bags on several occasions to the home of the Indian Consul). The palm trees have thrived, I am told. The fate of a fish pond my deputy built was less brilliant.

The *lamyai* trees had been a source, although a diminishing one, of the Consulate's *Lamyai* Fund. This was a small pot of unrecorded cash used to assist Americans in need. One of the last beneficiaries of it was a grad student from Berkeley who needed the price of a ticket to get down to Bangkok. Months went by after he left, and his promise to repay the loan went unfulfilled. Then one day a letter came with repayment, restoring our faith in human nature; his bus to Bangkok had been in an accident and he had been hospitalized.

On another occasion I got a call from McCormick Hospital: a young American tourist patient, apparently on drugs, was becoming hard to handle. She kept taking her clothes off. We arranged for her to fly back home and be met by a relative at the airport. Next day we got a frantic call from the relative: the girl hadn't been on the plane. Checking into it, we learned that she had taken her clothes off again on the leg to Hawaii, and had been taken into custody on landing there.

--- Charles Ahlgren



CG and Mrs. Ahlgren welcome Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana during their visit to Chiang Mai.



American and Thai staff of the Consulate-General, 1987.



Early stage of the palm tree planting project, on the drive in front of the office building.

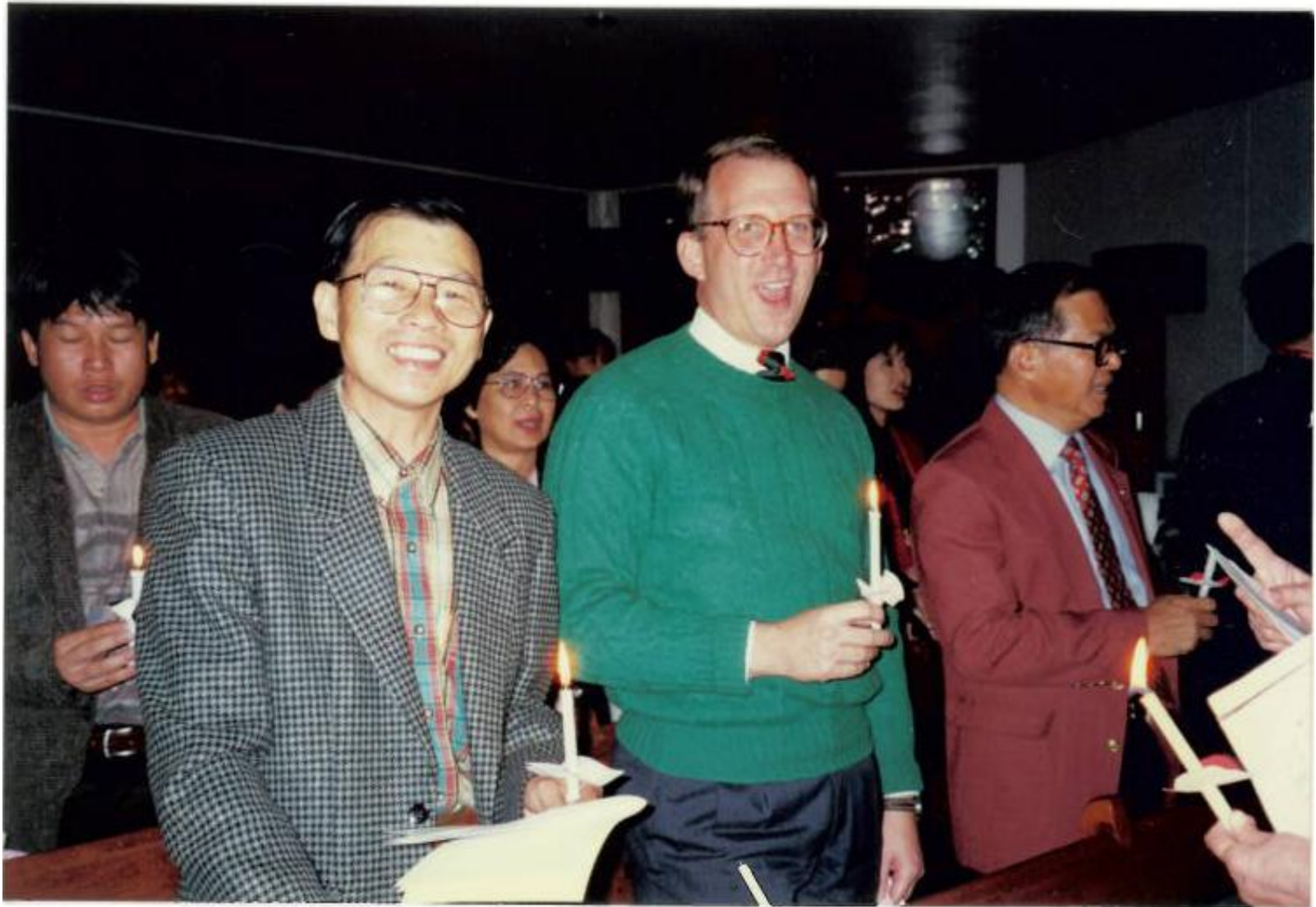
*"I treasure the memories of my tour
in Chiang Mai, with the lovely
capital city, historic Consulate
buildings and grounds.."*



Consul General Scott Douglas Bellard (1995-1998)



Congratulations to the staff of the Consulate General Chiang Mai on its 60th anniversary! I treasure the memories of my tour in Chiang Mai, with the lovely capital city, historic Consulate buildings and grounds, vibrant consular district and important mix of issues, an impressive corps of resident American citizens, and -- perhaps most of all -- the outstanding Consulate General personnel who contribute so significantly to achieving U.S. objectives and furthering U.S.-Thai relations in Northern Thailand. Thank you, and best wishes!



Christmas Eve 1996 at Chiang Mai First Church, CG Bellard with Payap University then-Vice President (now President) Dr. Pradit Takerangrangsarit and then-President Dr. Amnuay Tapingkae. (Bellard sang in the First Church choir with Dr. Pradit and Dr. Amnuay at this Thai-speaking congregation under the Church of Christ in Thailand.)



CG Bellard at the ceremony when the then-U.S. Information Service closed its office in Chiang Mai in 1996 and transferred its space to the American University Association (AUA) Language Center. Bellard with then-USIS Chiang Mai director Steve Thibault and senior FSN Acharn Supattra who was to later become the first public diplomacy assistant at the Consulate.

“My assignment at Chiang Mai was my best.”

Consul General Judith A. Strotz (1992-1995)

I was very fortunate to serve in Chiang Mai, my favorite post. Most striking to me was the friendship and assistance offered by the entire community in our consulate district, from government officials to private citizens. I remain grateful for this welcome and support.

While I was Consul General, the Golden Triangle was the source of most of the heroin in the U.S. market, though that was beginning to change at the end of my tour. Counternarcotics activities took the largest percentage of the consulate’s resources, including on crop substitution and law enforcement efforts such as Operation Tiger Trap, which led to the arrest of the leading narcotics trafficker of the day.

The consulate also followed closely the developments in Burma and the displaced persons camps. I was struck then by the burdens the repression in Burma imposed on its Thai neighbors and the strong contrast in living conditions on both sides of the border.

On a happier note, the consulate participated in many community activities, including the long-boat racing. We had a great advantage in coaching by the Fifth Special Forces Regiment, which we all deeply appreciated. My daughter and I enjoyed the many Thai celebrations, which our Thai colleagues organized for the entire consulate, and we seek opportunities to participate in them here to this day.

I learned a great deal in Chiang Mai, including a new way to look at the world. I extend my thanks to the consulate and the Thai community for all these experiences, which continue to provide happy memories and inspiration.

-- Judith Strotz





The Consulate wanted to compete to participate more in community activities. The Special Forces Regiment in Mae Rim kindly agreed to assist us, helping us with a boat and training. We practiced a lot and hard for a month or so before the race. On race day itself the Consulate community cheered us on, and we did not win but we did a lot better than we had expected, thanks to the training and our good Consulate spirit.



I think this was... a ceremony in memory of Khun Wongphan Na Lamphun, with whom I worked in Bangkok in the 1980s, and who was a great guide to all of us in Bangkok over the years.

“ But the truth is that Chiang Mai remains Chiang Mai, however much it changes. It is unique, it is special, and it is a place to be treasured.”

Consul General Eric S. Rubin (2001-2004)

Our time in Chiang Mai stands out as the most vivid, meaningful and rich of our 25 years in the Foreign Service. What Nicole and I remember most are the people: so many wonderful people. The staff at the CGR. Our friends and colleagues at the Consulate. Our friends in the Chiang Mai community. Our friends in the expat community.

Our girls grew up in Chiang Mai. By the time Rachel left, she was reading, writing and speaking Thai at a first-grade level, having spent two years in full immersion as the only foreign child in her class at Suan Noi preschool. The day we left in 2004 was one of the most emotionally wrenching days we have ever experienced.

I will never forget what I was told by another former CG when I was about to leave Washington for Chiang Mai. Everyone is going to tell you that you should have seen Chiang Mai 10 or 20 years ago, before it was spoiled. You'll be able to say the same thing to those who follow you. But the truth is that Chiang Mai remains Chiang Mai, however much it changes. It is unique, it is special, and it is a place to be treasured.

-- Eric Rubin





Nicole (my wife) and I were deeply honored to receive HRH Princess Sirindhorn and to escort her on a tour of the Consulate compound. She dined with us here when we hosted the leadership of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in October, 2003.



During Cobra Gold 2003, we traveled to Lampang for emergency response exercises in a forest area. When our RTA helicopters arrived at the landing zone, we found ox carts waiting to take us to the exercise site. Those of us who have lived in Thailand will understand why: it made a great photo!

“My husband David Summers and I will never forget the Loy Krathong celebrations, with thousands of khom loi.”

Consul General Beatrice A. Camp (2004-2007)

I treasure many memories of my three years at the Consulate, whether the everyday pleasure of working with good colleagues, the many parties on the Consulate grounds, or the way in which we all pulled together during crises. Some of the events that made headlines during my tenure included the terrible tsunami that hit southern Thailand on the day after Christmas in 2004, the mammoth anti-FTA demonstration in January 2006, and the military coup late on September 19, 2006. The morning after the coup I walked out of the Consulate gate to find armored personnel carriers on the street between us and the Municipal Office, manned by young soldiers who happily posed for pictures that I quickly uploaded and sent to Bangkok. We also put together some wonderful public outreach projects, including a student mural painting event on the 35th anniversary of Earth Day in 2005 and a booklet on U.S. involvement in northern Thailand 1867-2007 called “American Threads in the Lanna Fabric.”

My husband David Summers and I will never forget the Loy Krathong celebrations, with thousands of *khom loi* in the air and falling on the Consulate, or the chance to don blue *sua moh hom* at Songkran and climb into a Consulate truck loaded with a tank of ice water to do battle around the moat. We also got a lot of mileage out of our 1966 green Triumph Herald, not much bigger than a tuk-tuk and perfect for Santa’s chariot at Christmas. On the personal side, David and I particularly remember participating in the Sunday Bike Group, never knowing exactly where a ride would end up but always sure that it would be interesting and that we would come home well fed.

Having lived in Bangkok as a child, taught at Chiang Mai University in the 1970s and then worked at the Embassy in the 1980s, returning to Chiang Mai as Consul General in 2004 seemed like a dream come true. And so it proved to be.

-- Beatrice Camp





Every year for the King's Birthday the Chiang Mai Sunday Bike Group sponsored a ride up Doi Suthep. As the group was a truly grassroots, non-hierarchical organization led by local Thai volunteers, arrangements were simple – all you had to do was show up. We gathered at Thapae gate, where we picked up our shirts (blue was the color in 2005) and a few morning snacks to tide us over until we had earned our lunch on the top of the mountain. One of the many aspects of this group that David and I found so charming – besides the fact that snacks were always at hand – was the range of ages and abilities of those who joined in. Although the annual Doi Suthep ride attracted some very fit and competitive bikers, farangs as well as Thais, there was no stigma to being unfit and uncompetitive. Our first year, 2004, I gave up two thirds of the way and accepted a ride in the sag wagon that prowled the route for those in need. David's success that year made me determined to get to the top on my own two wheels the next time, which I did. Slow and steady, with many stops, but I reached the goal in time for lunch and many collective pats on the back. WE MISS THE SUNDAY BIKE GROUP!



Ajaan Withi, Bea Camp, and a village representative discuss the renovation of Wat Ban Koh, aided by funds from the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation.

“What makes northern Thailand so special is the warmth of the people, the natural beauty of the land, the elegance of the Lanna culture, and the unforgettable taste and aroma of the food. ”

Consul General Michael Morrow (2007-2010)

Only the luckiest American diplomats have the unforgettable experience of a posting in Chiang Mai. What makes northern Thailand so special is the warmth of the people, the natural beauty of the land, the elegance of the Lanna culture, and the unforgettable taste and aroma of the food. Any foreigner who spends time here and gets to know the land and the people becomes a "Khon Chiang Mai" for life. The U.S. Consulate General here -- now over 60 years old -- is an active part of making sure that the links remain strong between America and this very special place. It was my pleasure to serve that purpose.

-- Michael Morrow



Never underestimate the importance of culinary diplomacy, especially in a country like Thailand that has such a rich experience with food. I was invited by the Mayor to be a “guest chef” during the 2007 Lumyai Festival. I had just arrived in Chiang Mai, so this was a great opportunity for me to show that the U.S. Consulate was serious about northern Thailand’s food culture. K. Bua, Nong, and Daeng of the CGR staff did all the hard work to make a fabulous Lumyai salad dressing, but I got all the credit and press attention. It was a great event, and had the important effect of sparking a close relationship between the Mayor and me, which led to much more Consulate-Municipality cooperation on other matters.





President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter were the stars of the show for the 2009 Habitat for Humanity project that brought several thousand volunteers from around the world to build a community near Chiang Mai of 82 homes – a number selected to celebrate His Majesty King Bumiphol's 82nd birthday. The Consulate community pitched in big time. Thanks to our advantage of having several members of our crack GSO team with us for all five days of the build, the house we built was the first one completed and won high praise from Habitat's quality controllers for the soundness of its construction. All week long we toiled in the hot 90-degree sun, but there was no slacking off. Because every time we glanced over at the house the Carter family was building (with a big assist from Ambassador John), we saw 85-year-old Jimmy lifting cinder blocks and cementing them in.

*“Thailand is an enchanting – and important –
country for the United States.”*

Consul General Susan N. Stevenson (2010 – present)

As soon as my assignment to Chiang Mai was official, previous U.S. Consuls General began reaching out to me to tell me how much they loved the assignment. Thailand is an enchanting – and important – country for the United States, and so many of us come back for second and third tours. Many Americans end up retiring here, with thousands in our Consular District. I feel privileged to represent the United States in Thailand at such an interesting time politically and economically, and I’ll do my best to live up to the examples of my predecessors.

-- Susan Stevenson



Representing the United States abroad is all about cross-cultural communication, and I think this photo illustrates that. In September 2010, within weeks of my arrival, I represented the Ambassador at a check presentation ceremony to preserve Akha culture under the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Because I was a symbol of American support for their culture, this elderly Akha woman in Baan Doi Chang clasped my hand and thanked me for saving her way of life. It was a very humbling experience, made all the more so as I'm wearing an Akha jacket.





One of my most memorable experiences so far has been the U.S. Consulate's participation in Chiang Mai's famous Loy Krathong parade in November 2010. We designed the float around our 60th anniversary theme; and 40 Thai and American colleagues and family members participated in the procession. I sat on the float with my husband and two of our children (with CLO Amber Ferry's daughter joining us) while our eldest daughter rode ahead in a red convertible. The excitement of seeing everyone in their Lanna finery and getting an enthusiastic reception from the crowd made all the hard work worthwhile – and hopefully showed northern Thailand that we are part of the community. This shot shows us passing in front of the Consulate's south gate.



Special Message from Consul James M. Montgomery (1971-1974)

The Sword at the Airport

I remember the day when the final vestiges of Chiangmai as a kingdom separate from Thailand flickered out. It happened at the airport.

For all practical purposes Chiangmai had been part of the Kingdom of Thailand for several hundred years. From the late 18th century until 1933 it was a dominion under Thai suzerainty but ruled by its own royal house. In 1933 Chiangmai became a province of Thailand, but its royal house remained.

Indeed when we arrived in 1971, the house of Chiangmai was still with us, headed by an hereditary prince, the aged Chao Rajabut. And, in his public relations with the prince, the King of Thailand paid respect to the idea that Chiangmai still retained a bit of its historical identity... (Next Page)

... Those of us in Chiangmai's consular corps got to see this respect on display at the airport whenever the King of Thailand visited Chiangmai since we were expected to greet the King on these visits. (The corps was modest then, consisting of the Burmese Consul General and me. We were later joined by a British Consul.) We were always there well ahead of His Majesty's arrival and so got a good view of the plane-side ceremony. By the time the stairs were in place, Chao Rachabut's wife had pushed him in his wheel chair to the foot of the stairs, where he was the first Chiangmai resident to greet the King. As part of his greeting the Prince would give the King a large sword enclosed in a chased silver scabbard; it was the Sword of Chiangmai.

When the King returned to Bangkok the Prince would be at the foot of the stairs and the King would hand him back the sword. The symbolism of these exchanges was vivid and touching and undoubtedly gratifying to those in Chiangmai who still believed Chiangmai was unique among the King's lands.

I believe it was in 1972 that Chao Rachabut died. I know I took a delegation of representatives of all the resident American military units and civilian organizations to the bathing ceremony for the Prince in his house in Chiangmai.

When next the King visited, the Prince's widow delivered the sword to the King. Several weeks later, when the King left, he handed the sword not to a member of the House of Chiangmai, but to his own appointed governor. Whatever power and autonomy the sword embodied was now in the firm hands of the Thai bureaucracy.

There was one final gesture of respect several months later. Astrologers at the palace in Bangkok had determined the propitious day for Chao Rachabut's cremation. On that day, the Crown Prince arrived with the sacred fire. The Thai government had organized a large and elaborate parade through the town with the large ceramic jar containing the Prince's body atop a brilliantly caparisoned elephant. And members of the 7th Regimental Combat Team from Camp Kawila dressed in ancient military uniforms led the procession to the funeral pyre. The Crown Prince lit the pyre with the sacred fire and the last prince of Chiangmai disappeared into history on smoke and sparks.

Consul James M. Montgomery (1971-1974)



60 years of American threads woven closely into the Lanna fabric.

<http://chiangmai.usconsulate.gov>